

# Soccer Mom

I registered my oldest son for soccer clinic this morning, joining the ranks of soccer moms all over the world. But what does it mean to be a soccer mom? And why does it matter?

When I signed that registration form, I entered into a long-term contract, not so unlike a marriage. I've made a tremendous commitment to provide physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, financial and vehicular support for the athletic realm of my children's lives. I'll be bandaging boo-boos, explaining the rules, jumping and shouting from the sidelines, arranging play dates with teammates, praying for everyone's safety, feverishly writing checks, and - to fulfill the stereotype - shuttling my boys to games and practices all over the region. It's so much for one person to handle on top of a day job (or two) and the additional requirements of parenthood. What will it take to accomplish such a daunting feat?



*Image via Flickr/Creative Commons by Terren in Virginia*

Sacrifice. Obviously it will take money - registration fees, equipment, and a tank or two of fuel. I might have to put a hiatus on impulse clothing purchases and trips to the nail salon, but I knew when I first became a mom that it wasn't about me anymore. We'll have to turn down birthday party invitations in our quest for perfect attendance, like Cal. I might lose my voice. I might get drenched. A broken bone might jut its way into our plans. After all, we're giving up the comfort of the status quo in the name of the game. In the name of opportunity. We will lose many things, but never our faith.

Though I have yet to realize the price of my Saturday mornings this fall, I do know there's much to gain in the life of a soccer mom. While my boys are making friends on the field, I'll be making friends on the bleachers. I may even take up a hobby, like knitting, to keep my hands busy when I'm not waving or clapping. A dear family friend and former soccer mom informed me I'm in for a hefty dose of fresh air. That victory smile running towards me that ends in a sweaty post-game high-five - or hug. White soccer ball stickers with numbers on them that creep their way onto my car's rear window.

I'm most looking forward to the learning experiences recreational soccer will offer the boys and me. I have no background in organized sports and, to be honest, have never been a soccer fan, but, I won't let my preferences get in the way of a valuable experience for my sons. I will learn the game and, who knows, maybe coach someday. I believe in the power of sports and what they can do to keep one's body healthy and spirit happy. But there are also the social aspects of sportsmanship

which reveal the importance of rules, how to cooperate, and recovery from loss. It took me nearly three decades to learn the internal value of physical activity. Playing sports at an early age would have made many things in life easier for me. I just wasn't interested. Now, I am.

Call it living vicariously, but I want my children to discover the benefits of exercise and sports while they're very young. A life of overall health begins now. Soccer is a great place to start. It's simple. It's global. It's love.